



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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CANCER CASES ON KAUAI NOT HIGHER THAN REST OF THE STATE

HONOLULU — The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) jointly with the Hawaii Tumor Registry and University of Hawaii Cancer Center is releasing an evaluation of the incidence of cancer on Kauai and each of its census tracts. The evaluation found that there is not a higher incidence of cancer on Kauai compared to the rest of the state; except for melanoma of the skin, a cancer related to ultraviolet exposure.

The evaluation was conducted at the request of Kauai legislators and community members in response to concerns about the health impact of pesticides used by agricultural chemical companies.

The analysis found that cancers of the breast, endometrium, Hodgkin lymphoma, liver, ovary, prostate and thyroid were lower on Kauai compared to the entire state of Hawaii. Higher rates of melanoma on Kauai were found and may be explained by a larger proportion of older adults of Caucasian ancestry with high levels of lifetime sun exposure residing in the northern region of Kauai.

“Cancer clusters are rare, especially those that are linked to environmental exposures. Doctors and scientists often cannot explain why one person develops cancer and another does not,” said Dr. Barbara Brooks, DOH Toxicologist.

(more)

Cancer may be caused by a variety of factors acting alone or together, usually over a period of many years. These risk factors include age, family history and exposures to viruses and bacteria, lifestyle choices, sunlight exposure and on the job exposure to chemicals.

Of the more than 12,000 cancer deaths in Hawaii between 2000 and 2005, it is estimated that nearly 30 percent could have been prevented by avoiding tobacco use and up to 35 percent could have been averted by improving nutrition and maintaining a normal body weight. Geographic, economic, and educational barriers and other social inequities influence lifestyle factors that increase a person's chance of developing cancer.

Health Director Loretta Fuddy said, "DOH through its *Foundations for Healthy Generations Initiative* is committed to addressing the social conditions and physical environments where people live, work and play in order to improve the health of all groups in Hawaii."

The Hawaii Tumor Registry conducts cancer surveillance and maintains a confidential database of information on all reportable cases of cancer, benign brain tumors and many blood disorders diagnosed in Hawaii. The Registry is jointly operated by the University of Hawaii Cancer Center and DOH.

The DOH Hazard Evaluation and Emergency Response Office provides leadership, support, and partnership in preventing, planning for, responding to, and enforcing environmental laws relating to releases or threats of releases of hazardous substances.

The full evaluation report is available on the DOH website at www.health.hawaii.gov

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